

Fauquier County
Broadband Advisory Committee
Meeting of May 04, 2016

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Deputy County Administrator Katie Heritage called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

2. Introduction of Participants

Present were:

Mr. Gerhardt, Mr. Marshall, Ms. Heritage, Mr. Patusky, Mr. Friedman, Mr. Cornwell, Mr. Hopewell, Mr. Ridgell, Mr. Taylor, Ms. Wilkerson and Mr. Faller. Mr. Paul Conlin, of Blaze Broadband, was present as a guest. Absent were Mr. Hinkler, Mr. Herstek and Ms. Gaston.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Heritage called for nominations for the Chair and nominated Mr. Gerhardt. Seconded: Mr. Friedman. All in favor.

Ms. Heritage yielded the gavel to Mr. Gerhardt, who called for nominations for the Vice Chair. Mr. Ridgell nominated himself. Seconded: Mr. Patusky. All in favor.

4. Review of Bylaws, Rules of Protocol

There were no questions or discussion about the bylaws or rules of protocol.

5. Review of Comcast Negotiation Status

Mr. Burke, County Attorney, advised the committee that the County's 15 year cable television franchise with Comcast is due to expire in December 2016, and that the County has decided to pursue a formal negotiation process and issue a Request for Renewal Proposal. He indicated that, since there is currently no competition, our negotiation margin is small and we actually have a smaller density per linear mile requirement (18 per homes per mile) than many other counties. Most recent franchises require 30. Mr. Burke indicated that the County intends to hire Mr. Matt Ames, the state's leading expert in cable negotiations, to assist with the Renewal Proposal. "Trenching" will be a negotiation point in the new agreement. Ms. Heritage indicated that the local

government representative from Comcast, Ms. Marie Schuler, will be at the Committee's next meeting in June to provide information and answer questions.

6. Service Provider Updates

Mr. Gerhardt discussed the status of some of the service providers in the County, including ATT, T-Mobile, Sprint and Verizon. He indicated that many of these wireless providers were going to require additional towers—which are particularly difficult legislatively if over 120 feet in Fauquier County.

Mr. Gerhardt discussed Milestone, Inc., a company which specializes in using public space (schools, parks, utilities) as a venue for providers' equipment in an effort to maximize the aesthetic potential. Milestone operates on a cost-share basis with the owner/lessor. He indicated that Milestone will be meeting in the upcoming weeks with the School Board and School Facilities Committee, which have expressed an interest in their services.

Mr. Gerhardt updated the Committee on WISP providers currently operating in the county. He expressed the opinion that, although WISP is a viable alternative provider for some, line of site limitations make this less than optimal for a county-wide solution. A WISP system with a fiber backbone is probably the best option for Fauquier County. He discussed the possibility of the County actually owning the infrastructure and the creation of an authority for this purpose.

The committee generally concurred that, in order to move in a cohesive direction, a strategic plan was necessary. Mr. Gerhardt indicated that he was familiar with a company, Design Nine, used by Culpepper and other Virginia counties, which provides such services to localities. He indicated that Culpeper County was currently working with Design Nine and had issued an RFP. He indicated there is a possibility of funding from the state Department of Housing and Community Development, as well as possibly private foundations. Mr. Gerhardt asked the committee for approval to proceed with exploring a strategic plan. A motion was made by Mr. Patusky and seconded by Ms. Heritage. All in favor.

7. Other Business

Mr. Ridgell noted that the County's zoning ordinance is particularly important. He suggested the possibility of requiring that space on any new towers be made available to providers on a proffer basis.

Mr. Cornwell indicated that having a business plan is particularly important.

Mr. Conlin indicated that electric companies are generally averse to allowing providers space on their infrastructure.

Mr. Hopewell indicated that Community Development is currently working on a Telecommunications Ordinance, which should dovetail with the work of the BBAC.

8. Tasking

- Ms. Heritage will look into the County's procurement status regarding Design Nine
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- Ms. Heritage will contact Culpeper County and DHCD to determine what and when grant funding is available.
- Mr. Gerhardt and Ms. Heritage will further discuss the potential for funding from private foundations and will relay the results to the BBAC.

9. Next Meeting and Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Mr. Gerhardt adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 08, 2016 at the Warren Green Building.

Given under my hand this 6th day of May, 2016

Catherine M. Heritage, Deputy County Administrator